

Message

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Sent: 2/22/2018 3:31:18 PM
To: Harris, Kimberly [harris.kimberly@epa.gov]; Rita Bair - EPA [Bair.Rita@epa.gov]; Murphy, Elizabeth [Murphy.Elizabeth@epa.gov]; Jennifer Crooks - EPA [Crooks.Jennifer@epa.gov]
CC: Heather Shoven - EPA [Shoven.Heather@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Wolverine clips, Feb. 22, 2018

Did anyone hear from MDEQ that they found trace levels of PFAS in their sampling of the Saginaw-Midland pipeline? See last article below.

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From: Lippert, Allison
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2018 9:22 AM
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Subject: Wolverine clips, Feb. 22, 2018

Wolverine PFAS press clips
US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
February 22, 2018

MLive	No mention of \$40M cleanup during Wolverine earnings call
MLive	'Iridescent' toxic sludge pits were man's childhood playground
MLive	Low PFAS levels found in major Lake Huron drinking water system

http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2018/02/no_mention_of_40m_cleanup_duri.html

No mention of \$40M cleanup during Wolverine earnings call

Updated 7:17 AM; Posted Feb 21, 4:10 PM

By Shandra Martinez

ROCKFORD, MI -- If Wolverine World Wide executives are worried about mounting costs and lawsuits related to Michigan drinking water pollution, they weren't giving any indication during the company's fourth quarter conference call.

Analysts on the Wednesday, Feb. 21 call didn't ask about the company's rising contamination-related costs, which Wolverine expects to reach at least \$40 million. Instead, they drilled company leaders on revenue growth, promotional activity and growth drivers.

That's a change from last quarter, when the first question posed by an analyst during the Oct. 8 call was about the status of groundwater contamination costs and potential liability.

Four months ago, CEO Blake Krueger said Wolverine planned to spend \$3 million in 2017 responding to the environmental mess caused by using 3M Scotchgard for decades to treat leather at its downtown Rockford tannery.

That fourth quarter total has swelled to \$35 million.

Wolverine announced the rising costs in a Feb. 8 press release, saying the company had set aside \$40 million for ongoing testing and monitoring, bottled water for residents and in-home filtration systems and other expenses.

The move allowed the company to essentially to sidestep questions about the issue during Wednesday's call.

A public relations firm spokesperson for Wolverine declined comment, referring to previous statements made by Wolverine.

From the investors standpoint, Wolverine is addressing concerns by announcing plans to address the issue financially, says Andrew Burns, senior research analyst at the Montana-based brokerage firm D.A. Davidson, who has been tracking the publicly-traded Wolverine for six years.

"Their estimate of reserves is their best estimate to quantify the potential impact," said Burns, adding analysts don't have the expertise to offer a better estimate of costs than the company.

Wolverine's environmental costs have risen as more households around Rockford and Belmont have found PFAS in their drinking water. As of Feb. 8, PFAS has been detected in about 500 homes in two townships and the city of Rockford, according to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

More than 70 lawsuits have been filed against the 140-year-old shoe company, alleging at least three deaths and scores of cancer diagnoses.

The Feb. 21 call comes a day after 3M reached an \$850 million settlement with the state of Minnesota. The settlement ends a \$5 billion lawsuit against the manufacturer that alleged damage to natural resources and contaminated groundwater by disposing of chemicals over decades.

On Wednesday, Wolverine reported a net loss of \$60.8 million for the fourth quarter as sales fell more than 20 percent to \$578.6 million. For the year, the company reported a profit of \$300,000 on revenues of \$2.35 billion.

But the numbers analysts are paying attention are the adjusted earnings per share, after the contamination costs and one-time charges are stripped out.

"The profitability number Wall Street is looking are the 41 cents on the quarter and \$1.64 on the full year and that reflects a 10.9 percent operating margin," Burns said. "That's up substantially year over year."

On the most recent call, CEO Blake Krueger said he was optimistic about the company's future after the progress made during a 2-year Wolverine Way Forward restructuring plan. In the last year, Wolverine shuttered 200 stores, sold the Sebago brand, licensed out Stride Rite, and shed Department of Defense footwear business in Big Rapids.

"While some of the work will be ongoing, I'm pleased to say that the heavy lifting is behind us and the extra cost required to execute the transformation are complete," he said during the call.

Now, Wolverine is ready to spend up to \$45 million on its newest initiative, dubbed Global Growth Agenda, focused on creating more products, a bigger online presence and international expansion, especially in China and the Asia-Pacific region.

The \$45 million Wolverine is planning to spend on its future, rather than the \$40 million on cleaning up past mistakes, is the investment analysts are watching closely.

"We are paying attention to the go-forward earnings power of the company," Burns said.

http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2018/02/wolverine_armstrong_northeast.html

'Iridescent' toxic sludge pits were man's childhood playground

Updated 1:26 PM; Posted 1:25 PM
By Garret Ellison

BELMONT, MI -- As a kid living on Chauncey Drive NE in the 1970s, Michael LeBaron liked to play in the nearby Northeast Gravel pit, which, unbeknownst to neighborhood children at the time, was also a dumping ground for hazardous industrial waste.

Wolverine World Wide, Keeler Brass and Amway used it.

The gravel mine was a fun place with colorful ponds of semi-solid slurry that packed like a snowball -- and, yes, these 'sludgeballs' were thrown around. The mixture had the consistency of modeling clay and was great for making castles.

LeBaron didn't know what it was. He didn't think about it when his sister, Christine, died of pancreatic cancer in 2003 at age 44. She used to ride horses and play in the pits.

He didn't think about the pits until last fall, when he realized at a meeting why Wolverine's now-infamous House Street landfill in Belmont sounded so familiar.

Wait a minute, LeBaron thought. "I know this stuff."

"I've had contact with it and it wasn't at House Street," he said in a Jan. 17 interview with MLive/The Grand Rapids Press.

LeBaron, 54, has been thinking about the past a lot since then. The journeyman machine repair technician owns a home on Whitten Street NE in Grattan Township with waste barrels in the woods the state inspected as a Wolverine dump site.

His family also once lived in Belmont along the path of the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) plume coming from Wolverine's House Street landfill. They drank well water.

"Ignorance was bliss until just about four months ago," he said.

In November, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and representatives from Gov. Rick Snyder's office visited LeBaron's property to inspect barrels in a swamp behind the house his late parents owned for more than 20 years.

LeBaron bought the home in September and called the DEQ in November as worry spread about decades-old tannery waste contaminating local drinking water supplies.

The property is part of the old Armstrong Landfill across the street.

Since the state visit, LeBaron has heard little about the dump sites. Late last year, the DEQ said it planned to sample private wells in the area, take soil borings and drill monitoring several wells.

So far, none of that has occurred.

Records for Armstrong Landfill are hazy as to whether Wolverine used the site. Old Kent County Health Department letters mention Wolverine, but do not state outright the company used the dump, which was licensed under state Act 87 in 1967.

Whether the dump operated before its licensure is unclear. Under the Act 87 rules, it couldn't accept industrial or liquid waste.

Wolverine considered the site in the 1970s when it ran into trouble at Northeast Gravel, which was eventually closed due to groundwater contamination. In a 1974 letter, county officials said geological studies would be required for Wolverine to use the Armstrong dump, which had been closed for a couple years by then.

Michigan DEQ spokesperson Melanie Brown said "reports of repeated acceptance of Wolverine World Wide wastes" written in the DEQ's Dec. 20 field report on LeBaron's property is a "clerical error" that mixed up the dump with sludge ponds at Northeast Gravel. The DEQ says Armstrong's site is just an old refuse and garbage dump.

Further testing is "being prioritized in the overall North Kent Investigation workload for future testing activities," Brown said.

"Logistics and timing are still being worked out," she said. "We do not have any indication that Wolverine dumped here."

"What we know is that it was an old township dump."

Nonetheless, residents wonder about the water.

"I still maintain there's something in the water there," said Marcia Kutchin, who lived a mile and a half northeast of LeBaron's home on Wabasis Avenue NE for nearly 30 years.

Neighbors have died of cancer. Kutchin's dogs and horses have developed thyroid problems.

Few people today remember the Armstrong dump, she said. Even if Wolverine did not dump there, Kutchin is upset the DEQ has kept quiet about the site. She thinks the state robbed people of the opportunity to proactively seek alternative water.

"I'm very upset the DEQ has not alerted anybody," Kutchin said. "Everybody should have a choice to be able to drink bottled water and to wait for test results."

Since the news about Wolverine's tannery waste pollution broke, LeBaron has grappled with the realization that he was exposed to toxic waste and potentially contaminated water for much of his life.

From 1968 to 1972, his family lived on Pond View Drive NE in Belmont, about two miles southeast of Wolverine's House Street dump. Today, homes in that area have trace levels of PFAS from the dump site in their drinking water. What levels were years ago is anyone's guess.

"This process for me of becoming aware of how involved I was with this material was one of many weeks," he said.

Looking back, he wonders why kids had unfettered access to a hazardous waste site like Northeast Gravel, which only stopped accepting tannery sludge in 1979. There were no signs or fences to keep people out, he said. He rode bikes through the pits. Others rode horses. People used the area for target shooting.

Nobody knew it was dangerous, he said.

While in operation, the landfill area accepted general refuse, tannery waste, electroplating waste from the former Keeler Brass company and some detergent waste from Amway Corp., according to state records. The waste was dumped into unlined pits.

In the 1990s, the pits were redeveloped into Boulder Creek golf course. Twelve acres of tannery waste sit underneath a sand cap. The sludge ponds are now the course driving range.

To the north and east, independent testing has found low PFAS levels.

South of Boulder Creek, DEQ testing on Cannonsburg Road found total PFAS in a well at 223 parts-per-trillion (ppt). Of that total, PFOA is 22-ppt, PFHxS is 68-ppt and PFBS is 95-ppt.

The site is being investigated as a potential source of PFAS in Plainfield Township municipal water wells across the river.

Exposure to PFAS has been linked in human studies to certain cancers, thyroid disorders, elevated cholesterol and other diseases.

LeBaron said he believes the contamination caused his sister's cancer -- a family tragedy which took a major toll on both of his parents before they died.

He hasn't had his blood tested for PFAS and isn't obviously sick himself, but he hasn't been able to have children. Until recently, he thought that was just how the chips fell. Now, he wonders if it's due to his

exposure in the pits and a lifetime of well water consumption at various homes around the Rockford and Belmont area.

Recalling his time in the pits, LeBaron couldn't help but chuckle at the bizarre realization that he'd spent part of his childhood literally playing with toxic waste.

As he continued, the smile faded from his face.

"Of course, being a boy -- want to pick on the sister, she'd want to pick on me -- I'd make a nice ball of that and throw it at her," he said. "Yeah... not too pleased with the thought of that today, considering what it was and considering how she passed."

http://www.mlive.com/news/index.ssf/2018/02/pfas_lake_huron_saginaw-midlan.html

Low PFAS levels found in major Lake Huron drinking water system

Updated 8:57 AM; Posted Feb 21, 10:05 PM

By Garret Ellison

AU GRES, MI -- Low levels of toxic fluorochemicals have been verified in a seven-county Lake Huron bulk drinking water supply system that serves more than 260,000 people in Midland, Saginaw, Bay City and dozens of other Michigan communities.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality disclosed the discovery of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances called PFAS or PFCs in the Saginaw-Midland Municipal Water Supply Corporation (SMMWSC) system on Wednesday, Feb. 21.

The municipal utility system draws Lake Huron water through two intakes off Whitestone Point near Au Gres, where the contaminants were discovered in finished water last year.

Total PFAS in Au Gres water tested at 9.7 parts per trillion (ppt), according to a Dec. 13, 2017 letter by DEQ external relations director Sue Leeming. Of that, 4-ppt was combined PFOS and PFOA.

DEQ collected "verification" samples Dec. 7 and Jan. 11 from the utility's water intake line and two major pipelines. Low PFAS levels were found in every sample.

Total PFAS in raw water ranged from 1.3-ppt to 5.3-ppt in the sampling rounds. The highest combined PFOS and PFOA sample was 2.7-ppt.

The concentrations are well below the Environmental Protection Agency health advisory level of 70-ppt for PFOS and PFOA in drinking water, although there's scientific debate about the adequacy of that benchmark for protecting public health.

Exposure to PFAS has been linked in human studies to certain cancers, thyroid disorders, elevated cholesterol and other diseases.

DEQ did not identify a PFAS source, but advised localities to begin evaluating treatment options "due to the uncertainty on the source of this contamination in Lake Huron."

Neither Michael Quinnell, SMMWSC system general manager, nor Kim Mason, Saginaw water director, had seen DEQ verification sampling results when contacted by MLive on Feb. 16. Calls to water system managers in Au Gres and Midland were not returned.

Quinnell couldn't say whether there had been any public notification. He downplayed the seriousness by noting lower concentrations than "what we're seeing in other areas of the state."

"We're testing at parts per trillion," he said. "That's 0.000004 parts per million."

"Obviously, there's a big concern about Rockford and the air base to the north of here in Oscoda," Quinnell said, referencing the PFAS contamination caused by Wolverine World Wide waste dumping in Kent County and U.S. Air Force groundwater pollution caused by firefighting foam used at the former Wurtsmith Air Force base.

PFAS from Wurtsmith and upstream at Camp Grayling has been draining to the Au Sable River and Lake Huron since the military began using AFFF firefighting foam in the 1970s.

Mason said Saginaw hadn't conducted independent testing of its water system after being notified by Quinnell on Dec. 14.

The news is concerning, she said.

"When we read the reports in other communities, it wasn't something we thought we'd have a problem with," she said. "I can't say it's completely shocking, but it isn't something I thought would be a concern looking at the source of water we're using."

The SMMWSC is a joint venture between Saginaw and Midland established in 1946. The non-profit municipal corporation operates three pumping plants which feed parallel 48- and 72-inch pipelines running south to the Tri-Cities area.

According to the DEQ, more than 50 communities source water from the system, including the Sims-Whitney Utility Authority, Linwood Metro Water District, the Saginaw-Chippewa Indian Tribe, the cities of Au Gres, Omer, Standish, and other Tri-Cities area suburbs.

The DEQ's Feb. 21 letter was copied to wholesale water customers, local health departments, Gov. Rick Snyder's office and the EPA.

The DEQ recommended affected water systems monitor for PFAS on a quarterly basis, sample finished water at treatment plant taps, notify the public and "minimize public exposure to the extent reasonably possible" by evaluating adjustments in treatment and conducting cost/benefit studies on the feasibility of installing new technology.

Conventional water treatment technologies do not remove PFAS.

In Kent County, where private and public water supplies have been contaminated by PFAS, Plainfield Township is installing a \$400,000 granular activated carbon system on its 40,000-customer system to remove PFOS and PFOA presently detectable at 6.8-ppt.

PFAS was also confirmed in 2016 at similarly low levels in the Huron Shores Regional Water Authority (HSRWA) system in Tawas.

Other Michigan municipal systems with confirmed PFAS detections include Ann Arbor, Grayling and the village of Sparta.